(a) whether it is a fact that there is a total ban on export of all varieties of rice from India;

(b) if so, the reasons for this total ban and what steps are being taken to remove this ban;

(c) whether it is also a fact that there is a huge drop in foreign exchange earnings due to the ban on export of rice from India;

(d) if so, what is the value of the estimated loss on account of such ban; and

(e) what measures are being taken to lift the ban or give special permissions on a case to case basis depending on the type of such export orders which can bring in good revenue in foreign exchange to the exchequer?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) The export of Basmati Rice is allowed subject to Minimum Export price (MEP) and Port Regulations. The export of Non-Basmati Rice is prohibited.

(b) Government has put restrictions on export of rice with a view to ensure its domestic availability at affordable prices.

(c) and (d) The export of rice during April - September 2008, as compared to the same period in the previous year is given below:

Value in US$ Million

	April-September 2007	April-September 2008
Basmati Rice	372.16	1062.33
Non-Basmati Rice	794.12	300.76

(e) Government has been monitoring the availability of stocks, price, etc. and has recently decided to reduce the MEP to $ 1100 and to remove the duty on export of Basmati Rice.

Rise in cement prices

257. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's measures to keep cement prices under check seem to have had a cascading effect on companies price realizations;

(b) if so, what are main reasons puts forward by these industries and whether they have pointed out that raw material cost has gone up by 11% to Rs. 2730 crore for the first quarter of the calendar year 2008;

(c) if so, what are steps Government propose to take in this regard to check rise of cement prices;

(d) whether any limit has been fixed for each quantity of cement; and

(e) if so, to what extent Government has achieved that?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) and (c) The average all India retail price of cement has decreased from Rs.237 per bag in April, 2008 to Rs.234 per bag in January, 2009. The production of cement has increased by 7.38% during the period April, 2008-January, 2009 as compared to April, 2007-January, 2008.

(b) and (d) No Sir.

(e) Does not arise.

Tea export centres

†258. SHRI SAMAN PATHAK: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of export centres established by Government in the country particularly in West Bengal for exporting tea;

(b) the quantity of tea exported from tea export centres situated in West Bengal during the last three years and in the current year alongwith the number of such tea centres; and

(c) the amount of profit earned by the Government from these tea export centres?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (c) Tea is exported through Sea ports, Land ports and Air ports from India. The Ports in the state of West Bengal are (i) Kolkata (Sea), (ii) Kolkata (Air), (iii) Haldia (Sea), (iv) Petrapole (Land), and (v) Panitanki (Land).

The details of tea exported from the State of West Bengal from different ports are as follows:-

Name of the Ports	2005-06 Qty. (Th. Kgs.)	2006-07 Qty. (Th. Kgs.)	2007-08 Qty. (Th. Kgs.)	2008-09 (Apr.-Dec.) (E) Qty. (Th. Kgs.)
Kolkata (Sea)	48,526	59,302	68,301	42,351
Kolkata (Air)	75	28	17	11
Haldia (Sea)	13,241	5,358	7,062	9,697
Petrapole (Land)	—	5	—	—
Panitanki (Land)	2	—	—	—

(E) Estimated and subject to revision

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.